

DICIONÁRIO DE HISTORIADORES PORTUGUESES

DA ACADEMIA REAL DAS CIÊNCIAS AO FINAL DO ESTADO NOVO

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FAORO, Raymundo (Vacaria, 1925 - Rio de Janeiro, 2003)

Raymundo Faoro was born in Vacaria, a small town in the countryside of Rio Grande do Sul. He was the son of Italian farmers and immigrants Attilio Faoro and Luisa D'Ambros. As a child, he moved to the city of Caçador, Santa Catarina, where he began his studies and attended secondary school at *Colégio Aurora* [Aurora College]. He returned to his home state to study at the University of Rio Grande do Sul (URGS), graduating in Law in 1948. During this period, he was one of the co-founders of the magazine *Quixote*. In the early 1950s, he moved to Rio de Janeiro, where he worked as a lawyer. In 1963 he passed a civil service examination to become state prosecutor, a position from which he would retire some years later. Raymundo Faoro was the author of few works. He wrote his first and most important book, *Os donos do poder: formação do patronato brasileiro* [The owners of power: the formation of the Brazilian body of employers] in 1958, which was published by Globo from Rio Grande do Sul. Despite winning the José Veríssimo Prize awarded by the *Academia Brasileira de Letras* (ABL) [Brazilian Academy of Letters], the book had little echo at the time of its release, most likely due to the political and intellectual context of those years which was characterised by a widespread national-expansionist belief in the role of the state in all economic and social issues — which contrasted with the fundamental theses of *Os donos do poder*, the interpretation of which sought to emphasise the suffocating control the state had over society.

With the 1970s came a significant change in the way Faoro's work was received. By then, it was recognised as one of the most important interpretations of Brazil. The authoritarian political scenario led by the military contributed to this sudden shift, since *Os donos do poder* seemed to shed some light on the actions of the armed forces — one of the sectors that made up the bureaucratic estate according to Faoro. The context had changed and so had the very structure of the work, which was reissued in 1975 with considerable revisions which tripled its size — from 270 to around 750 pages — including annotations that went from 140 to 1335 pages — and quotations added from German sociological references taken directly from the original, which had previously been taken from Spanish editions — and adding two more chapters. Despite this change in form, Faoro states in the preface to the second edition that the fundamental theses remained the same, having however been adapted to the style and requirements of current times.

The 1970s and 1980s were Raymundo Faoro's most active decades in terms of intellectual production and public participation. Before the reissue of *Os donos do poder* in 1974, the lawyer from Rio Grande do Sul published his second book, *Machado de Assis: A pirâmide e o trapézio* [Machado de Assis: The Pyramid and the Trapezoid], in which he drew a political and social map of the Second Empire based on Machado's work.



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In 1977 he was elected president of the *Ordem dos Advogados do Brasil* (OAB) [Brazilian Bar Association], a role he held until 1979. As president of the OAB, Faoro became known for his intense participation in the struggle to restore the *habeas corpus* in the campaigns for amnesty and the revocation of the Institutional Acts, as well as to convene a constituent assembly. The latter was the subject of his third book *Assembleia Constituinte: A legitimidade recuperada* [Constituent Assembly: Legitimacy regained], published by Brasiliense in 1981. At the time he became an active figure in the public debate on re-democratisation. He made frequent contributions to wide circulation newspapers and magazines. His most regular collaboration was with the magazines *Época* [Epoch], *Senhor* [Lord] and *Carta Capital* [Capital Letter], and the *Jornal da República* [Journal of the Republic], which he co-founded. His house became an important meeting point for personalities from different sectors of the political spectrum, such as Tancredo Neves and Luís Inácio Lula da Silva. The latter invited him to run for vice-president, which he declined. Although he was not an academic in the true sense, he had strong ties with the universities and took part in seminars and conferences, published articles in scientific magazines and even acted as a visiting professor in 1986, given the activities he carried out at Instituto de Estudos Avançados (IEA-USP) [Institute of Advanced Studies]. On that occasion, he gave the lecture *Existe um pensamento político brasileiro?* [Is there a Brazilian political thought?], which became the basis for his fourth book, published in 1994 under the same title. As in his previous works, *Existe um pensamento político brasileiro?* deals extensively with the thematic of liberalism and the historical relations between Brazil and Portugal. Presenting an interpretation that sought to uncover the limits, contradictions and ambiguities of liberalism in Brazil, Faoro noted that, even after Independence, there was no separation from Iberian political culture and that the so-called Brazilian liberalism was inorganic, statist and conservative, and imposed serious limits on the modernisation of Brazil.

A profound connoisseur of Portuguese historiography, Faoro was an attentive reader of authors such as Alexandre Herculano (1810-1877), Oliveira Martins (1845-1894), Jaime Cortesão (1884-1960), João Lúcio de Azevedo (1855-1933), Antônio Sérgio (1883-1969) and Vitorino Magalhães Godinho (1918-2011), among others. Based on these authors, he took part of some of the most relevant arguments in Portuguese historiography, such as the debate on whether feudalism existed in Portugal. Like Herculano and Godinho, the author of *Os donos do poder* argued the feudal model was incompatible with the Portuguese world, stating it was impossible to distinguish any layer of lords endowed with political autonomy between king and vassals. Joining Antônio Sérgio and Jaime Cortesão, he sought to deconstruct the idea that Portugal was a kind of agrarian monarchy. In Faoro's words: "A false observation might suggest that Portugal was an agrarian monarchy that used maritime trade to exchange its rural surpluses. If developed coherently, this doctrine would lead to the maritime route being considered an activity that was peripheral and exterior to the core of the kingdom, based on the idea that — a few leagues from Lisbon or Porto — the people were tending to the fields or grazing, and very far from the sea breeze. The country's unity was loose and there was effective independence between two economic systems. At best, overseas expansion was a fleeting and reckless adventure, a false revolution on the surface, buried in the ruins of a poorly digested empire. "Maritime activity" — Jaime Cortesão would argue — "is not only at the roots of nationality, from where it rises like sap to the trunk — it's also like the bone marrow that strengthens and unites its entire history." (R. Faoro, *Os donos do poder...*, 2001, p. 66).



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In Faoro's view, the history of Portugal holds an indisputable central place in the political and social problems Brazil faced, and made up a long-lasting history that spans six centuries between the reign of King João I and the government of Getúlio Vargas. The essential thesis of *Os donos do poder* is that the formation of an early absolutist state in Portugal paved the way for the creation of a system tied to patrimonialism and reinforced by the opening of sea routes, which in turn helped to deconstruct the traces of feudal aristocracy. In this context, it wasn't the possession of land that made someone noble, but the positions and roles in state bureaucracy, which led the initially aristocratic estate to become bureaucratised. As a community, the bureaucratic estate acted to preserve its particular interests, which reinforced the patrimonial dimension of the Portuguese state and, by means of historical correspondence, of the Brazilian state. Paradoxically, Faoro stated that the elements that allowed the formation of an early commercial capitalism in Portugal — one that had a political orientation and in which mercantile activities were subordinated to the needs of the state — were the same elements that made it impossible, centuries later, to form an industrial capitalism, under which the independence of the social classes from the state was to be an indispensable condition — in contrast with the archaic nature of the Portuguese social structure.

The concepts of patrimonialism and bureaucratic estate, the Iberian roots of the vices of Brazilian political culture and the vision of the historical tendency towards centralisation of power in Brazil since the colonial period are some problematic topics that are still very dear to Brazilian historiography. Research carried out on the Empire's bureaucracy, such as the work carried out by José Murilo de Carvalho, revealed a scenery that was far more fragmented than Faoro seemed to declare. Several authors — such as Fernando Henrique Cardoso — believe there was some exaggeration in the assertion that the bureaucratic-statist elite has persisted throughout Brazilian history, to the point of making it the driving force behind the country's history. Furthermore, one of the main aspects brought up by his detractors is the thesis that states there was a total separation of the bureaucratic estate and the state from the social classes and the economic interests.

In the 1990s, Raymundo Faoro's work took on new political and intellectual contours and was considered — despite the author's own opinion — as the theoretical basis for the neoliberal reforms implemented by the governments of Fernando Collor de Mello and Fernando Henrique Cardoso. His concepts of patrimonialism and bureaucratic estate have come to occupy a privileged space in the public debate around the issues of corruption and state reforms. The vulgarisation of his main concepts was not accompanied by a systematic analysis of his work, and there are still few studies that specifically analyse the Faorian interpretation. His readers, however, point out that Faoro's original contribution had several dimensions, such as: the emphasis on the independence from the political sphere; the inaugural appropriation of Max Weber in Brazil; the questioning of the theses that supported the existence of feudalism in Brazil and Portugal. In 2000, Faoro was unanimously elected to occupy chair number 6 of the ABL. Due to his fragile health, the inauguration was postponed four times and only took place formally in September 2002. According to his son André Leal Faoro, at the time of his death Faoro was working on a book about militarism. He died on 14 May 2003 and was buried in the São João Batista cemetery in south Rio de Janeiro. Minister of Justice Márcio Thomáz Bastos was present at the funeral in representation of President Lula, a friend of Faoro, and reinforced his importance to the foundations of democracy in Brazil.

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